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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: VIETNAM - AVIAN FLU: SITUATION REPORT NO.2

REF: Hanoi 316  
Case Count/Statistics

¶1. In humans: As of March 7th, the WHO officially reports 21 cases of Avian Influenza, H5N1 (AI) in humans in Vietnam during the 2004-2005 outbreak, 13 of which have resulted in death. The four cases reported in February include: a) A 21-year-old man from Thai Binh Province. He developed symptoms on 14 February and was admitted to hospital on 20 February. B) His 14-year-old sister, also from Thai Binh Province. She developed symptoms on 21 February and was hospitalized the following day. C) A 69-year-old man, also from Thai Binh Province. He developed symptoms on 19 February, was admitted to hospital the same day, and died on 23 February. D) A 35-year-old woman from Hanoi. She developed symptoms on 18 February and was hospitalized on 24 February.

¶2. Although they don't appear in WHO's official case counts, the media is reporting on three cases in Vietnam (a nurse, and two non-symptomatic relatives of patients, all of who have tested positive for AI) that are receiving particular attention. Initial indications are that these cases may not indicate a change in the virus or give cause for alarm. They are probably consistent with other, previously reported cases and/or may be the result of increased surveillance. Details on these recent cases follow in paras 5 and 6.

¶3. In Poultry: Cases continue, however, MARD reported that of the 35 infected provinces/cities found to have bird flu incidences this year, in 18 of these provinces/cities, including Hanoi and HCMC, there were no new cases detected in the last 21 days (as of March 7). On March 7, there was one case detected in Tra Vinh province--400 ducks were destroyed. On March 6, there were 7 new cases in Bac Lieu, Ben Tre, and Dong Thap provinces--where 2,877 ducks were destroyed. On a more positive note, Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)'s Veterinary Department said on March 7, that, "As of March 6, eighteen out of 35 bird flu-affected provinces and cities across Viet Nam had not reported any new cases for three weeks."

The Nurse

¶4. A 26-year old male nurse in Thai Binh province, who treated AI patients, is hospitalized and has tested positive for AI. While WHO still reports that this case is "under investigation" and cannot provide official guidance, we have received a more informal readout from the Medical Director of the local SOS International Clinic (a private, for-profit clinic). The Medical Director, Dr. Bruce Miller, is well-connected with both WHO and MOH and indicated that his opinion was that of the WHO. He believes that this is a likely case of human-to-human transmission, but not an indication of a change in the virus or a cause for alarm. The nurse likely has sustained close contact with the patient, just as we have seen in other family clusters, and vigilant use of PPE cannot be confirmed. However, he reports that the nurse lived in a rural area and did have other opportunities for exposure to the virus, so human-to-human transmission will likely never be confirmed or ruled-out in this case. He believes this case to be very similar to others in which human-to-human transmission was suspected or confirmed and does not believe this case indicates a change in the virus or its transmission.  
Non-Symptomatic but Positive for H5N1

¶5. The BBC and other media outlets reported today on two patients (61 and 81 years old), also from Thai Binh province, who are non-symptomatic, but have tested positive for AI. The WHO is not surprised at this development. They report that the GVN is improving and expanding its contact surveillance, and it has long been suspected that cases with no or mild symptoms are going undetected. WHO reported that it is not possible at this point to know whether the detection of these cases now is coincidental, a result of improved surveillance, or an indication of increased transmissibility in the AI virus.

Hanoi AI Working Group

16. Post's Working Group benefits from cooperation and participation the numerous relevant agencies at Post - including HHS, CDC, DOD, FAS, and AID. Whenever needed, we are happy to serve as a resource for the Department's Working Group and provide input as "on the ground" experts whenever requested.

MARINE